

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 050 240

VT 012 178

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TITLE Career Indications Among Junior Officers.
INSTITUTION Air Force Personnel Research Div., Lackland AFB, Tex.
REPORT NO AFHRL-TF-69-33
PUB DATE Sep 69
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice, Career Planning, *Job Satisfaction,
*Labor Turnover, Longitudinal Studies, *Military
Service, Military Training, *Officer Personnel
IDENTIFIERS Air Force

ABSTRACT

A study of officer input from the principal Air Force commissioning programs was undertaken to determine the predictability of an Air Force officer's career decision and to evaluate relationships between career intent and various demographic, environmental, and attitudinal factors. This report describes the study and provides a preliminary examination of the data collected on a group of officers from the pre-commissioning period through 3 years of service. Based on expressed career intent, the most favorable sources of retention were the commissioning programs for enlisted men. The yearly responses to the career intent statement indicated a decline in career intent at least through the first few years of service. Job characteristic factors found to be most important centered around job satisfaction, such as working under competent supervisors, having a sense of accomplishment, and having an opportunity for advancement. Least important values were represented by such factors as early retirement, travel, and having a definite work schedule. In general, the perceived importance of a reward or working condition in the Air Force showed little relationship to the perceived possibility of achieving that factor. (Author/BH)

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AFHRL-TR-69-33

AIR FORCE



ED050240

HUMAN RESOURCES

CAREER INDICATIONS AMONG JUNIOR OFFICERS

By
Faye Shenk

PERSONNEL RESEARCH DIVISION
Lackland Air Force Base, Texas

September 1969

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FOREWORD

This report contains results of analyses of relationships between various demographic, environmental, and attitudinal influences with reported career intentions of a sample of officers from OTS, OCS, AFROTC, and the Academies who entered the Air Force as second lieutenants during 1963-64. The study was conducted under Project 7719, Development of Procedures for Increasing the Efficiency of Selection, Evaluation, and Utilization of Air Force Personnel; Task 771907, Demographic and Personal Factors Related to Career Decisions and Reenlistment.

This report has been reviewed and is approved.

John G. Dailey, Colonel, USAF
Commander

ABSTRACT

A historical study of officer input from the principal Air Force commissioning programs was initiated in 1963. This study was designed to determine the predictability of an Air Force officer's career decision and to evaluate relationships between career intent and various demographic, environmental, and attitudinal factors. Information on this group has been compiled for the period prior to commissioning and through three years of active duty. A final analysis will be made with the ultimate criterion of "in vs. out of service." This report presents a description of the study and results from a preliminary examination of the data. Based on the expressed career intent, the most favorable sources for retention were found to be OCS and OTS-AECP; officers from both of these sources have had prior service experience. The yearly responses to the career-intent statement indicated a decline in career intent at least through the first few years of military service. Job characteristic factors considered important and attainable were also examined. Factors considered most important centered around job satisfaction such as working under competent supervisors, having a sense of accomplishment, and having an opportunity for advancement. Least important values were represented by such factors as early retirement, travel, and having a definite work schedule. In general, the perceived importance of a reward or working condition in the Air Force showed little relationship to the perceived possibility of achieving that factor. In fact, the greater the discrepancy between the importance and possibility of given factors, the more likely a subject was to have an unfavorable attitude.

SUMMARY

Shenk, Faye. *Career indications among junior officers.* AFHRL-TR-69-33. Lackland AFB, Tex.: Personnel Research Division, Air Force Human Resources Laboratory, September 1969.

Problem

The problem of officer turnover has continued with varying degrees of intensity through the years. The failure of adequate numbers of officers serving initial active-duty tours to select the Air Force as a career can affect mission requirements and inflict manpower planning problems. As a result the Air Force is forced to procure, train, and replace large numbers of officers on a systematic basis in order to meet operational requirements. Because of the concern with this problem, a historical study of officer input from the principal Air Force commissioning programs was initiated in 1963. This study was designed to determine the predictability of an Air Force officer's career decision and to evaluate relationships between career intent and various demographic, environmental, and attitudinal factors.

Approach

To determine what factors are associated with initial career intent, a sample of 5,600 subjects was selected from officers who were scheduled to enter the Air Force during 1963 and 1964 as second lieutenants. The subjects were surveyed prior to their entering active duty and are being resurveyed each year with essentially the same attitudinal items so that changes may be determined. Information on this group has been compiled for the period prior to commissioning and through three years of active duty. A final analysis will be made with the ultimate criterion of "in vs. out of the service."

Results

Based on the expressed career intent, the most favorable sources for retention were found to be the Officer Candidate School (OCS) and the Officer Training School-Airman Education and Commissioning Program (OTS-AECP). The yearly responses to the career-intent statement indicate a decline in career intent at least through the first few years of military service. Job characteristics considered most important and attainable were also examined. Factors considered most important centered around job satisfaction—such as working under competent supervisors, having a sense of accomplishment, and having the opportunity for advancement. Least important values were represented by such factors as early retirement, travel, and having a definite work schedule. In general, the perceived importance of a reward or working condition in the Air Force showed little relationship to the perceived possibility of achieving that factor. In fact, the greater the discrepancy between the importance and possibility of given factors, the more likely a subject was to have an unfavorable attitude.

Conclusions

It has been shown that career intent remains relatively stable among those subjects who indicate they are definitely career-minded or definitely not career-minded. Changes occur primarily among the undecided group, with the trend toward nonselection of an Air Force career. It has also been found that the more characteristics an officer sees as attainable in the Air Force, the more likely he is to have a favorable attitude toward service life. It also appears that the importance he attaches to these characteristics is less critical if he believes there is a good possibility of obtaining the characteristics he considers important. The greater the discrepancy between the importance and possibility of attainment of given characteristics, the greater the likelihood the officer will plan to leave the Air Force. The results and conclusions are based on the intermediate analyses of the data from the career-intent study. Officers who are still on active duty will be identified at the end of their obligated tour of duty. When the final criterion is obtained, all of the survey data will be reevaluated to determine at what point the career decision is made and what factors, if any, are predictive of actual selection and nonselection of an Air Force career.

This summary was prepared by Faye Shenk, Personnel Systems Branch, Personnel Research Division, Air Force Human Resources Laboratory.

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CAREER INDICATIONS AMONG JUNIOR OFFICERS

I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of officer turnover has continued with varying degrees of intensity through the years. The failure of adequate numbers of officers serving initial active-duty tours to select the Air Force as a career can affect mission requirements and inflict manpower planning problems. As a result, the Air Force is forced to procure, train, and replace large numbers of officers on a systematic basis in order to meet operational requirements. Because of the concern with this problem, innovative programs such as "Accent on People" and "Junior Officer Council" have been initiated to stimulate career decisions, and pay incentives have been increased. However, the immediate and net effect of these programs is unknown. Similarly, the magnitude of career interest in officers at the moment of entry to active duty is unknown. There has been no evidence to relate initial career motivation to events during active military service nor to ultimate decisions to remain or seek release from active duty. The characteristics which identify those officers who elect to become careerists and those who tend to shift in their attitudes must be defined, as well as when and why a decision is made and what factors influence the change. In other words, the total impact of military service until the point of an ultimate decision for or against an Air Force career must be evaluated within and among the various commissioning sources.

Toward solution of the problem, a number of specific questions might be investigated: How strong is the relationship between initial career motivation prior to commissioning and the final career decision? Do such factors as social environment, family structure, and background of the wife influence retention? And do such factors as college grades, college major, type of college and geographic area influence career decisions and eventual retention? How do Air Force personnel policies affect career intent? Is there a relationship between retention and on-duty performance as measured by effectiveness reports? Does attend-

ance at a military professional school or enrollment in a graduate training program influence career intent? Are factors influencing career intent and eventual retention consistent among the various college graduate or academy commissioning sources? Is it possible or practical to create a career predictability scale for use in early selection of candidates for the officer training programs?

With these questions in mind, a new approach has been taken to analysis of career decisions.

II. PROCEDURE

A historical study of officer input from the principal Air Force commissioning sources was initiated in 1963. This study has several objectives: to determine the stability of career intent through the initial obligated tour of active duty; to examine relationships among background characteristics; and to examine relationships of attitude changes to performance, service life experience, job satisfactions, and actual selection of an Air Force career. To determine the possible influence of different screening and training processes, the information is being analyzed for each procurement source separately and for all sources combined.

To determine what factors are associated with initial career intent, the original sample was selected from officers who were scheduled to enter the Air Force during 1963 and 1964 as second lieutenants. This provides a homogeneous sample with respect to length of service and grade so that only source of commission need be taken into account initially. The subjects were surveyed prior to their entering active duty and are being re-surveyed each year with essentially the same attitudinal items so that changes may be determined. The sample will be followed through five years of active duty in the Air Force.¹

This report includes data compiled for the period prior to commissioning and through three years of active duty for a sample of 5,609 junior officers. Although it will be some time before a final analysis can be made with the ultimate criterion of "in vs. out of the service," the available data has been examined.

¹ Analyses of the precommissioning and first-year career-intent data were published in PRL-TR-65-2 and PRL-TR-67-10.

III. RESULTS

In an analysis of the precommission survey data, it was found that a socioeconomic pattern emerged which distinguishes between officers who are favorable to an Air Force career and those who are unfavorable to a career. The officers who are favorable toward a career are more likely to be married; they represent a somewhat lower economic background and have had a more transient, unsettled home life. More of this group began working early in life (i.e., during junior high school). They have attended state universities where they were in the middle third of their class and studied in general areas rather than fields such as science and engineering. Their parents and wives generally have positive attitudes toward an Air Force career. In contrast, more of the noncareer subjects have apparently had stable home lives; they are single and desire to settle down and live in the same area as their families. They have attended private schools where they joined fraternities; they had specialized areas of study and were in the upper third of their class.

In each of the surveys, the subjects have been asked to indicate their career attitude on a five-point scale from 1, indicating a definite intention to make the Air Force a career, to 5, indicating a definite intention not to make the Air Force a career. Based on this career-intent response for the various surveys, Officer Candidate School (OCS) and Officer Training School-Airman Education and Commissioning Program (OTS-AECP) graduates continue to be the most favorable sources for retention. Over 80 percent of the subjects consistently report they will "definitely" or "most likely" make a career in the Air Force. Since officers from both of these sources have had prior military service, it is probable that they would not have entered the commissioning program without a high degree of career intent. The fact that officers from these commissioning sources have served as enlisted men suggests that total time invested in the military service may be a potent factor in the career decision. Air Force Academy (AFA) graduates appear to be the next most likely source for retention, although there has been a sharp drop during the second and third year of those indicating a favorable attitude toward a military career (from 75 to 54 percent). The AFA graduates, nevertheless, have shown a consistently more favorable attitude toward a service career than their counterparts from the United States Military (USMA) and Naval (USNA) Academies who transfer to the Air Force.

Table 1 gives the percentage of favorable (i.e., "definitely" or "most likely" career-minded) and unfavorable (i.e., "most likely not" or "definitely not" career-minded) attitudes toward an Air Force career for each year's survey by source of commission and for the total group. This information is also depicted graphically in Figures 1 and 2. The data show a trend generally toward a decline in career intent as length of military service increases.

Table 2 shows the percentage of shifts in career intent from precommissioning through the third year of active duty for each source of commission and all sources combined. In other words, these tables show the change in career attitudes from the precommissioning phase to the first year of active duty, precommissioning to the second year, and precommissioning to the third year; then from the first year to the second year, and the first year to the third year; and finally from the second year to the third year of active duty. For example, 47 percent of all the subjects had a favorable career intent prior to commissioning; the figures indicate that after the first year of active duty, 73 percent of those subjects still held a favorable attitude, 21 percent had changed to uncertain, and 6 percent had changed to an unfavorable attitude. Of those subjects who were uncertain prior to commissioning (32 percent), 27 percent were favorable at the end of the first year, 46 percent remained uncertain, and 27 percent were unfavorable at the end of this time period. Of those holding an unfavorable attitude prior to commissioning (21 percent), 9 percent adopted a favorable attitude and 30 percent changed to uncertain during their first year of military service. The shift from year to year can be seen by reading across the table. Of those who had initially had a favorable career attitude, 73 percent still had a favorable attitude after the first year of active duty, but this percentage dropped to 66 percent by the second year, and to 56 percent by the third year. Of those who were initially uncertain, there was a gradual shift away from this category toward an unfavorable attitude. The percentage of those who held an unfavorable attitude remained fairly constant: 61 percent from precommission to first year; 61 percent from precommission to second year; and 68 percent from precommission to third year. The least change in attitude occurred between the first and second years of military service. This may be due to the fact that many of these officers had been involved in training programs and were just then beginning to experience actual military service.

Table 1. Percentage of Favorable and Unfavorable Attitudes Toward An Air Force Career

Source of Commission	Percentage of Favorable and Unfavorable Career-Intent Statements												Project M Data ^a 1955-61 Input as of 1966	
	Surveys During First Three Years of Active Duty						ATC Advisory Board Survey ^a							
	Precommission Survey		1st Year		2d Year		3d Year		1-36 Mo.		25-36 Mo.		% Active	% Loss
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable		
AFA ^b	76	03	75	05	67	11	54	24	79	3	78	3	78	22
ROTC	37	18	44	21	39	26	34	41	40	32	42	38	32	68
USNA	51	11	46	22	36	30	32	40	-	-	-	-	63	37
USMA	58	13	57	09	52	16	50	20	-	-	-	-	74	26
OCS	82	07	85	09	87	07	82	10	34	34	35	41	86	14
OTS ^c	45 ^d	13	36	29	36	35	32	44	67 ^e	09	-	-	60 ^e	40
OTS-AECP			82	05	82	09	82	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
AC									-	-	-	-	67	33
Total Group	44	15	47	21	43	27	37	39	39	31	42	37	45	55
N	5,588		4,352		3,910		4,213		2,803		672		63,108	

^aProject M data appear in PRL-TR-64-19; the ATC Advisory Board data were extracted from PRL-TR-65-16.

^bAFA graduates did not enter Air Force until 1959.

^cOTS began in 1960.

^dIncludes OTS-AECP graduates.

^eIncludes a small number who are in excess of 36 months active commissioned service.

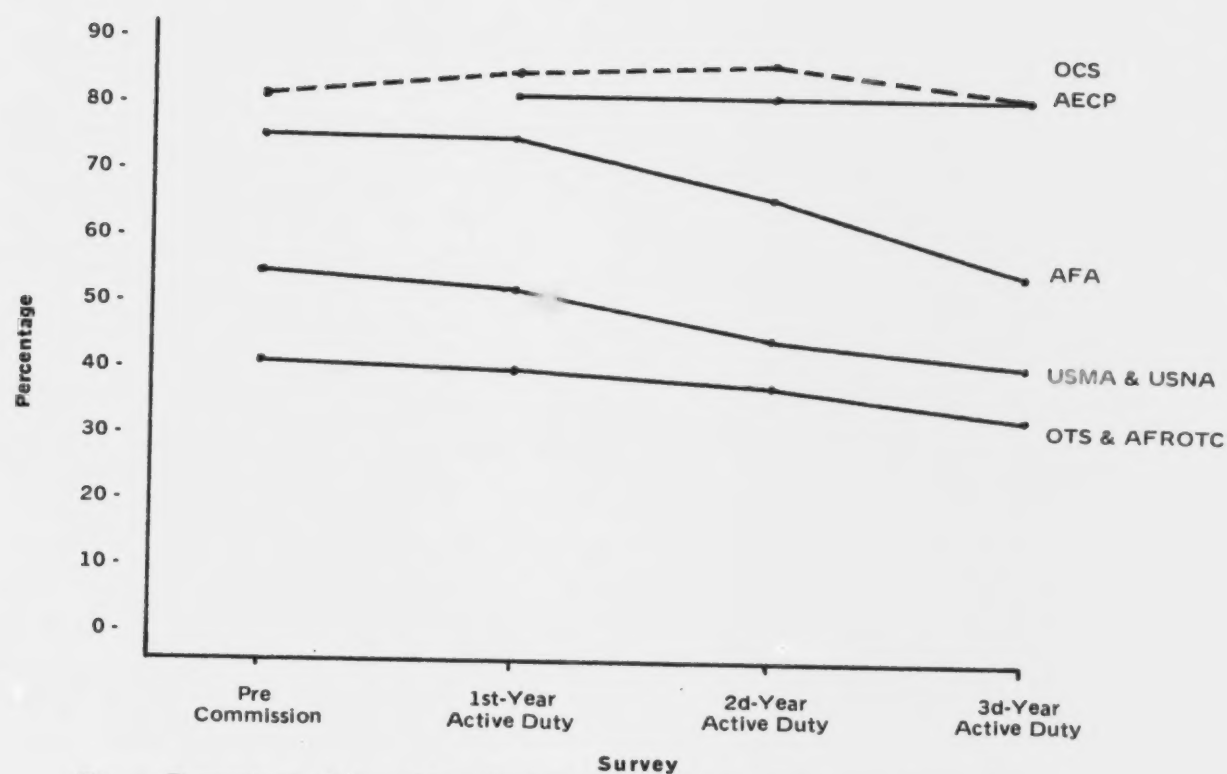


Fig. 1. Percentage of favorable attitudes toward an Air Force career for each commissioning source.

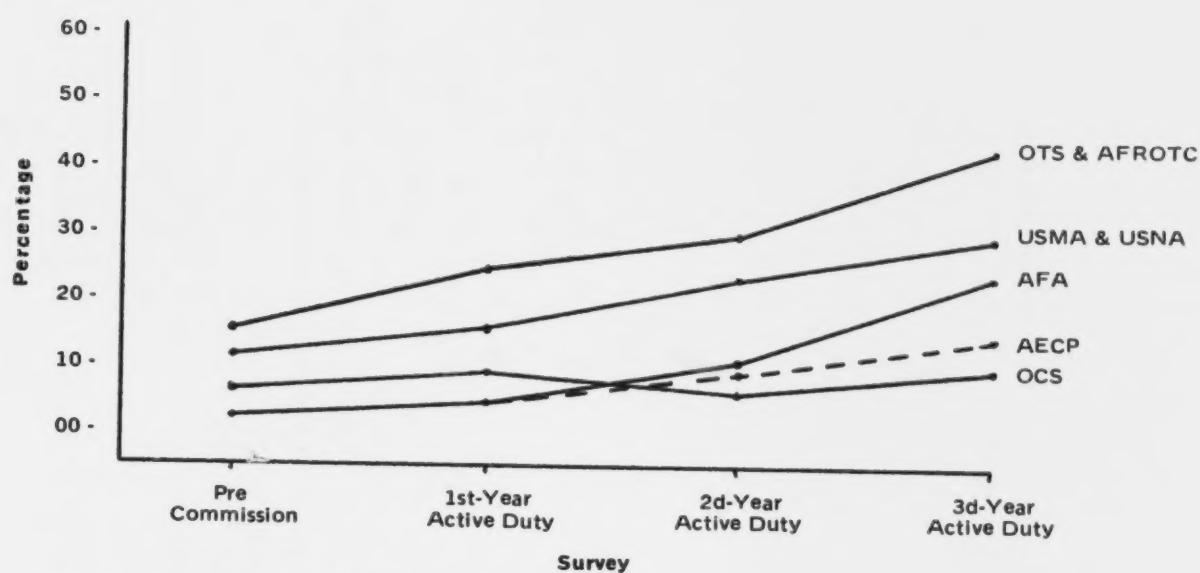


Fig. 2. Percentage of unfavorable attitudes toward an Air Force career for each commissioning source.

In Table 2, comparisons made for each source of commission reflect differences among the various commissioning programs. The OCS and OTS-AECP groups exhibited the least change in attitude from year to year. Few of these subjects indicating a favorable attitude changed their minds. For example, 87 percent of the OCS subjects indicating a favorable attitude prior to commissioning still had a high career intent at the end of three years of active duty. Of the OTS-AECP subjects, 89 percent retained a favorable attitude throughout this same time period. In contrast to these two sources with prior military service, the AFROTC, OTS, and USMA graduates showed a steady decline in favorable career intent while maintaining a relative stability of those initially unfavorable toward a military career. A fairly sharp decrease in career intent was shown among AFA and USNA subjects who began their Air Force careers with a favorable attitude. The percentage of USNA subjects retaining a favorable attitude dropped from 68 percent during the first year to 35 percent during the third year. A drop from 85 percent still favorable to 61 percent still favorable occurred among the AFA subjects. In both sources the subjects with an unfavorable career intent remained fairly constant. Generally, if a subject indicated an unfavorable attitude toward military service, even prior to entering active duty, he was not likely to change his mind. Those who initially held a favorable attitude, however, tended to change, and their expressed attitude was not stable.

Table 3 presents the reverse comparisons of the shifts in career attitudes. The percentage of those favorable, uncertain, or unfavorable prior to commissioning is given for subjects responding to the career-intent categories during the first, second, and third years of active duty, etc. For instance, 75 percent of those indicating a favorable attitude after one year of active duty had also indicated a favorable attitude prior to commissioning, 23 percent had been uncertain, and 2 percent had been unfavorable prior to commissioning. Of those subjects with an unfavorable intent after one year of active duty, 13 percent had previously been favorable, 54 percent had been uncertain, and 33 percent had been unfavorable prior to entering active duty. From these tables, it is apparent that the increase in the unfavorable categories is derived largely from subjects who previously held favorable attitudes. Of those responding to the unfavorable category the first year, 13 percent had pre-

viously had a high career intent. By the second year, this percentage had increased to 21 percent, and by the third year to 27 percent in the total sample. This particular percentage is quite high among the AFA and USNA groups, and although these sources represent a relatively small input to the total sample, a definite trend among these two procurement sources is demonstrated.

Table 4 shows the correlations between the career-intent statement in the four yearly surveys. The correlations are moderately high but are low enough to indicate that from 54 percent to 78 percent of the various samples responded differently to the first-year active-duty survey, 69 percent to 88 percent to the second-year active-duty survey, and 79 percent to almost 100 percent to the third-year active-duty survey than they did to the precommission survey. The smallest change in career-intent statements occurred between the first and second year of active duty.

There may be some hesitancy in accepting the statement of an officer regarding his career attitude as a valid reflection of his probable future behavior. Such caution is particularly appropriate if one considers that the individual was not responding anonymously, although he was assured that the information would be confidential and would be used for research only. The validity of these statements will, of course, be determined only through experience.

To examine the potential reliability of officer career attitudes from the survey group, the percentages of favorable and unfavorable attitudes were compared to other studies. Comparison was made both with actual retention data and with similar attitude information compiled on officers who have been on active duty up to 36 months. These comparisons are included in Table 1. With the exception of USNA, USMA, and OTS, there are marked similarities between the extent of favorable career attitudes at the time of entry to active duty and career selection as reflected in Project M data for the entire 1955-61 officer input (Dieterly, 1967). These exceptions are not unexpected as the status of the USNA and USMA graduates at the time of entry to active duty may be somewhat different from that found since 1959 with the advent of the AFA classes. The OTS actual retention data represent a relatively small number of officers who entered in 1960 and 1961 when the classes were quite small and selective.

Table 3. Percentage of Subsequent Career-Intent Responses Shifted from Initial Response

Response Category on Subsequent Survey	Percentage of Subsequent Response the Same as or Shifted from Initial Response											
	Pre-1st Yr. Comparison			Pre-2d Yr. Comparison			Pre-3d Yr. Comparison			1st-2d Yr. Comparison		
	(% Subsequent Response)	(% Career-Intent)	(% Distribution Initial Survey)	(% Subsequent Response)	(% Career-Intent)	(% Distribution Initial Survey)	(% Subsequent Response)	(% Career-Intent)	(% Distribution Initial Survey)	(% Subsequent Response)	(% Career-Intent)	(% Distribution Initial Survey)
Career	(48)	75	23	02	72	25	03	04	82	16	02	03
Uncertain	(41)	32	58	10	(41)	36	54	10	(33)	30	14	12
Non-career	(11)	13	54	33	(12)	21	52	27	(20)	09	58	41
N		4,348		3,899		3,847		3,967				
Total Group												
Career	(85)	93	05	02	(89)	94	03	02	(89)	100	00	00
Uncertain	(09)	66	17	17	(08)	66	17	17	(06)	34	66	00
Non-career	(05)	25	50	25	(03)	34	65	00	(05)	17	17	66
N		96		87		76		76		87		80
OCS												
Career	(77)	87	12	01	(78)	90	09	01	(76)	95	05	01
Uncertain	(20)	52	42	06	(20)	61	35	04	(18)	47	44	09
Non-career	(03)	31	50	19	(02)	36	52	12	(06)	23	41	36
N		429		401		373		401		401		373
AFA												
Career	(42)	72	25	03	(41)	65	31	04	(35)	72	23	05
Uncertain	(45)	33	59	08	(46)	37	54	09	(36)	26	57	17
Non-career	(13)	13	55	32	(13)	19	54	27	(29)	07	30	63
N		1,358		1,143		1,088		1,147		1,147		1,088
OTS												
Career	(90)	95	04	01	(89)	96	02	01	(87)	97	03	00
Uncertain	(07)	64	27	09	(08)	56	33	11	(10)	56	33	11
Non-career	(03)	50	33	17	(03)	40	40	20	(03)	00	60	40
N		126		85		84		84		85		84
OTS-AECP												
Career	(41)	68	29	03	(42)	66	30	04	(43)	79	19	02
Uncertain	(45)	28	60	12	(45)	31	57	12	(36)	30	56	14
Non-career	(14)	10	49	41	(13)	19	52	29	(21)	09	34	57
N		2,274		2,087		2,322		2,035		2,035		1,980
AFROTC												
Career	(62)	81	15	04	(61)	70	19	11	(59)	89	07	04
Uncertain	(27)	47	33	20	(27)	50	50	00	(32)	20	80	00
Non-career	(11)	00	75	25	(12)	42	29	29	(09)	00	57	43
N		45		44		44		44		44		44
USMA												
Career	(49)	71	38	18	(51)	72	22	06	(48)	89	11	00
Uncertain	(41)	29	50	55	(37)	31	63	06	(33)	31	56	13
Non-career	(10)	00	12	27	(12)	46	27	27	(19)	14	36	50
N		51		49		46		46		48		48
USNA												
Career	(49)	71	38	18	(51)	72	22	06	(48)	89	11	00
Uncertain	(41)	29	50	55	(37)	31	63	06	(33)	31	56	13
Non-career	(10)	00	12	27	(12)	46	27	27	(19)	14	36	50
N		51		49		46		46		48		48

Table 4. Correlations Between Career-Intent Statements at Various Times During First Three Years of Active Duty

Source of Commission	Product-Moment Correlation					
	Pre-1st Yr	Pre-2d Yr	Pre-3d Yr	1st-2d Yr	1st-3d Yr	2d-3d Yr
AFA	.47	.45	.32	.64	.56	.66
OTS	.59	.46	.42	.66	.57	.69
OTS-AECP	.53	.52	.46	.79	.59	.72
AFROTC	.56	.47	.38	.68	.53	.64
USMA	.59	.47	.40	.82	.55	.73
USNA	.55	.35	-.06	.68	.32	.64
OCS	.68	.56	.43	.87	.66	.61
Total	.60	.51	.42	.70	.57	.68

Similarity in percentages favorable toward an Air Force career is also noted between officers in the sample and those with varying lengths of service in the ATC Advisory Board study. The related data from the latter study suggest that favorable career attitudes reported by officers in the present study were probably realistic indications of what might be found in experience; i.e., apparently no systematic attempt was made by officers surveyed to respond with an indication of favorable career attitudes because of anticipated rewards or penalties. However, the percentage of officers who indicated that they do not intend to make a career in the Air Force increased with each year of active duty.

Included in each of the surveys is an attitude measurement called the Job Importance-Job Possibility Scale.² In this scale, 23 job characteristics or rewards, such as "have competent supervisors," "do a great deal of traveling," and "obtain a good salary," are listed. The respondent is asked to rate each characteristic on a five-point scale, first with respect to its importance to him and then with respect to the possibility of his obtaining it in the Air Force. This technique is based on the assumption that easy attainment of a reward is not enough; the reward, in addition to being attainable, must also be of importance to the individual. Presumably, if an officer sees little

chance of obtaining in the Air Force those rewards which are important to him, he will not be inclined to make a career of the service.

In examining the precommission responses to the scale items, it was found that differences occurred in what "career" and "noncareer" officers require for job satisfaction. For example, the career-minded officer tended to consider as most important in a job having adequate job security, doing a great deal of traveling, being in a competitive situation, becoming proficient in a specialized type of work, achieving leadership in his field, and having an opportunity to fly or continue flying. In contrast, the noncareer officer tended to regard as most important having a say in what happens to him, obtaining a good salary, settling down in a certain area, and spending a lot of time with his family. The careerists presented an optimistic attitude regarding the possibility of achieving their desires in the Air Force. The non-career subjects indicated little possibility of meeting their job hopes in the service.

In a study by the United States Navy Personnel Research Activity (Githens, 1966), a questionnaire consisting of career values based primarily on the Job Importance-Job Possibility Scale was administered to 644 Naval ROTC regular officers who were both career and noncareer officers. For comparison of the results on the Navy scale and the Air Force scale,³ the items considered most important and least important were rank ordered in terms of the mean value of the frequency with which each item was checked. Similarly, items considered most possible and least possible of attainment were rank ordered for both the Navy and the Air Force studies. The rank ordering of factors was as follows:

²These scales were developed and utilized by Harding (1962; 1963) in studies of OTS graduates and USAFIT-trained officers. One item, "Achieving leadership in my field," was added to the Harding scale for this study.

³The information shown for the Air Force scales is derived from the second-year active-duty data. Rank-order correlations between each of the various year groups for the scale range from .97 to .99, so this may be considered a representative sample.

Air Force	Navy
Factors Most Important	
Feel that you are accomplishing something	Interesting work
Be promoted on basis of ability	Feeling of accomplishment
Have competent supervisors	Satisfactory home life
Work under consistent and intelligent personnel policies	Full use of abilities
Have a say in what happens to you	Opportunity to learn
Achieve leadership in my field	Personally respect superiors
Be given recognition for work well done	Technically qualified superiors
Obtain a good salary	Do work which my wife and family can be proud of
Factors Least Important	
Settle down in a certain area	Steady employment
Have a definite work schedule	Travel
Be able to retire at an early age	Social prestige
Do a great deal of traveling	Active social life
Make a lot of money	Have a definite work schedule
	Early retirement
Factors Most Possible of Attainment	
Do a great deal of traveling	Steady employment
Variety in job activities	Serve country
Adequate job security	Travel
Be able to retire at an early age	Early retirement
Keep very busy	Steady advancement
Do work which wife and family can be proud of	Do work which wife and family can be proud of
Feel that you are accomplishing something	Opportunity to learn
Become proficient in a specialized type of work	Interesting work
Factors Least Possible of Attainment	
Settle down in a certain area	Full use of abilities
Make a lot of money	High quality of subordinates
Have a definite work schedule	Success through ability alone
Spend a lot of time with my family	Opportunity to do work my way
Have a say in what happens to you	Good pay
Obtain a good salary	Work under consistent and intelligent personnel policies
	Satisfactory home life
	Have a definite work schedule

There is a great similarity between the Navy results and the results shown in the present study. For instance, the factors considered most important by both services generally revolve around job

satisfaction, such as working under competent supervisors, feelings of accomplishment, and advancement. Least important values represent such factors as early retirement, travel, and having a definite work schedule.

Comparison of the possibility of attainment of the selected factors also indicates a great similarity in the two samples. The possibility of attainment of the factors becomes more important, or more meaningful, when considered with the importance of the individual items. These comparisons are as follows:

Air Force	Navy
Factors High in Importance but Low in Possibility of Attainment	
Work under consistent and intelligent personnel policies	Satisfactory home life
Have a say in what happens to you	Full use of abilities
Be promoted on the basis of ability	Work under consistent and intelligent personnel policies
Have competent supervisors	Feeling of accomplishment
	Success through ability alone
Factors Low in Importance but High in Possibility of Attainment	
Adequate job security	Early retirement
Do a great deal of traveling	Travel
Be able to retire at an early age	Steady employment
Variety in job activities	Active social life
	Serve country

In general, the perceived importance of a reward or working condition in the Air Force has little relationship to the possibility of achieving that factor. This has been shown in the very low correlations between the possibility and importance scales. In fact, in the Air Force study, the relationship has decreased each year. In the Navy study which included both career and noncareer officers, a rank-order correlation coefficient of -.11 was obtained between the importance and possibility of the factors. The factors high in importance but low in possibility of attainment can have a potential leverage on career-intent decisions if this relationship can be changed—that is, if those factors high in importance can also be high in possibility of attainment. The factors low in importance but high in possibility become significant if they identify areas in which the Air Force has made a large investment with relatively low pay-off. Also, if emphasis on these areas through counseling and advertising can be changed to factors of more importance to the individuals, career motivation may be enhanced.

Table 5. Rank-Order Correlations of Job Importance and Job Possibility Scales at Various Times During First Three Years of Active Duty

Variables Compared	Correlation
Precommission: Importance vs. Possibility	.20
First-Year Active: Importance vs. Possibility	.08
Second-Year Active: Importance vs. Possibility	.04
Third-Year Active: Importance vs. Possibility	-.01
Importance Scale: Precommission vs. First-Year Active	.98
Importance Scale: Precommission vs. Second-Year Active	.97
Importance Scale: Precommission vs. Third-Year Active	.96
Importance Scale: First-Year Active vs. Second-Year Active	.98
Importance Scale: First-Year Active vs. Third-Year Active	.97
Importance Scale: Second-Year Active vs. Third-Year Active	.99
Possibility Scale: Precommission vs. First-Year Active	.98
Possibility Scale: Precommission vs. Second-Year Active	.98
Possibility Scale: Precommission vs. Third-Year Active	.97
Possibility Scale: First-Year Active vs. Second-Year Active	.99
Possibility Scale: First-Year Active vs. Third-Year Active	.99
Possibility Scale: Second-Year Active vs. Third-Year Active	.99

It is equally important to note the consistency in the order of importance attached to the factors by the Air Force officers from year to year, as well as the consistency in their preception of the possibility of achieving these factors in the service. Rank-order correlations for each of the scales and combinations are shown in Table 5. A complete listing of the Job Importance-Job Possibility Scale items, with their rank-order values and correlation coefficients for each Air Force commissioning source and total sample, are given in Table 6.

Included in each of the surveys are items from which the respondent selects five factors which would most likely influence him to make a career in the Air Force and five factors which would most likely influence him not to make a career in the Air Force. The frequencies of response to

these items indicate that the two highest ranking factors which have a positive influence on career decision are satisfaction with the job and educational opportunities. Other factors which have a positive influence are opportunity for travel, having challenging work, enjoyment of the responsibility and leadership of being an officer, early retirement, patriotism, and preference for the Air Force way of life. In contrast, insufficient salary and separation from family are the factors indicated as most likely to influence an individual to decide against an Air Force career. Other negative factors include dissatisfaction with the job, limited opportunity for advancement, lack of opportunity to use initiative, lack of challenge in the work, inadequate living quarters, and isolated tours.

Table 6. Rank Order of Importance and Possibility of Scale Items by Source of Commission for Second-Year Active-Duty Survey^a

Scale Item	Importance ^b and Possibility ^c Rank Order by Source of Commission															
	Total		AFA		OTS		OTS-AECP		AFROTC		USMA		USNA		OCS	
	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Adequate job security	16	3	6	9	16	3	11	6	5	3	18	3	15	2	11	9
Work under consistent and intelligent personnel policies	5	17	13	4	5	17	5	16.5	19	17	7	19	5	15.5	5	17
Have a say in what happens to you	4	21	14	6	4	21	4	19	1	22	3	20	3.5	21	9	18
Feel that you are accomplishing something	1	8	16	13	1	8	1	7	12	8	1	7	1	7	1	7
Do a great deal of traveling	21	2	7	7	21	2	21	2	5	2	22	2	21	4	21	4
Become proficient in a specialized type of work	13	7	17.5	5	13	7	13	8	22	7	17	12	18	8	12	5
Be in a competitive situation	12	9	8	12	12	9	15	10	5	9	11	9.5	12	10	13	8
Obtain a good salary	10	15	19	22	8	14	10	14.5	13	14	10	17	9.5	18	6	14
Have a definite work schedule	20	20	4.5	14	20	19	20	20	10	20	21	21	20	20	20	21
Settle down in a certain area	22	23	21	2	22	23	22	22	11	23	23	23	22	23	22	23
Be promoted on the basis of ability	2	16	9	15	2	16	2	14.5	2	15.5	2	15	2	15.5	2	15
Spend a lot of time with my family	11	18	11	20	11	18	12	16.5	14	18.5	14.5	18	14	14	15	19
Advance at a fairly rapid rate	7	14	2	16	7	15	6	18	7	13	6	16	6	17	7	16
Be able to retire at an early age	19	1	23	23	19	1	17	1	8	1	19	1	19	1	17	1
Have competent supervisors	3	13	22	21	3	13	3	12	15	12	4	13	3.5	13	3	13
Make a lot of money	17	22	10	17	17	20	19	21	9	21	13	22	16	22	19	20
Be given recognition for work well done	8	11	12	8	9	12	8	11	20.5	11	8	8	7.5	11	8	12
Fly or continue flying	23	19	17.5	10.5	23	22	23	23	16	18.5	20	11	23	19	23	22
Do work which my wife and family can be proud of	9	6	20	1	10	6	9	5	23	6	9	6	9.5	6	10	3
Have prestige or social status	18	12	1	10.5	18	11	18	9	17	10	16	14	17	12	18	11
Keep very busy	14	5	4.5	18.5	14	4	14	3	3	5	12	5	13	5	14	2
Variety in job activities	15	4	3	18.5	15	5	16	4	18	4	14.5	4	11	3	16	6
Achieve leadership in my field	6	10	15	3	6	10	7	13	20.5	15.5	5	9.5	7.5	9	4	10
Rho Coefficient	-.0148		-.1177		-.0098		.0524		-.0276		-.0923		-.0064		.1712	

^aThese data were obtained from the second-year active duty surveys; however, they are considered representative of the various yearly surveys.

^bI = Importance rank order.

^cP = Possibility rank order.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It has been shown that career intent remains relatively stable among those subjects who indicate they are definitely career-minded or are definitely not career-minded. The changes occur primarily among the undecided group, with the trend toward nonselection of an Air Force career. It has also been found that the more characteristics an officer sees as attainable in the Air Force, the more likely he is to have a favorable attitude toward service life. It also appears that the importance he attaches to these characteristics is less critical if he believes there is a good possibility of obtaining the characteristics he considers important. The greater the discrepancy between the importance and possibility of attainment of given characteristics, the greater the likelihood the subject will plan to leave the Air Force.

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The comments presented are based on intermediate analyses of the data from the career-intent study. In continuing analyses, officers who are still on active duty will be identified at the end of the fourth year of active duty and again at the end of the fifth year of active duty. When the final criterion is obtained, all of the survey data will be reevaluated to determine at what point the career decision is made and what factors, if any, are predictive of actual selection and nonselection of an Air Force career. Detailed analyses will be made, including such comparisons as Duty AFSC vs. college major, OERs vs. Duty AFSC, and yearly changes in job expectations. In addition, each of the survey items will be compared with the ultimate criterion and with items across each survey.